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CIA recruiting students, changing image

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By Matt Doran

Pssst, hey buddy. You got a trench coat? Or a pair of dark sunglasses? Can you keep a secret, wear a fedora and make late night rendevous with shady characters?

Well, then, the Central Intelligence Agency may be able to help you. Recruiters from the controversial government agency are on campus conducting employment interviews as part of a recent effort to improve university relations.

"They're here because they have expanded their recruitment, and are looking for a lot of personnel," Ivan Settles, Director of the UW Placement Center said. "They have recruited on our campus for years and years, and they have been very successful."

"They put up posters in our buildings, advertise in the Daily, set up displays . . . What shocks me . . . is that no one seems to be questioning this," Student Jonathan Heller said in a letter to the Daily. "As students I believe that we have the right and responsibility to question authority.

"Who is the CIA? What do they do? Should they be made welcome at our University?" he asked.

"The CIA is a legitimate employer," Settles said. "Some people want to be employed by them just as much as somebody else wants to be employed by Bank of America, RainierBank, or Boeing. It's a government agency."

"What we are after is people who will challenge us constructively, offer us a different perspective, who will stir up the pot a bit and who will help us consider all points of view, particularly the unorthodox," Deputy Director of Intelligence Robert Gates told the *New York Times*.

Gates, who was speaking about the CIA's effort to re-establish it's connections to American campuses, emphasized the usefulness of the academic world to the agency's operations.

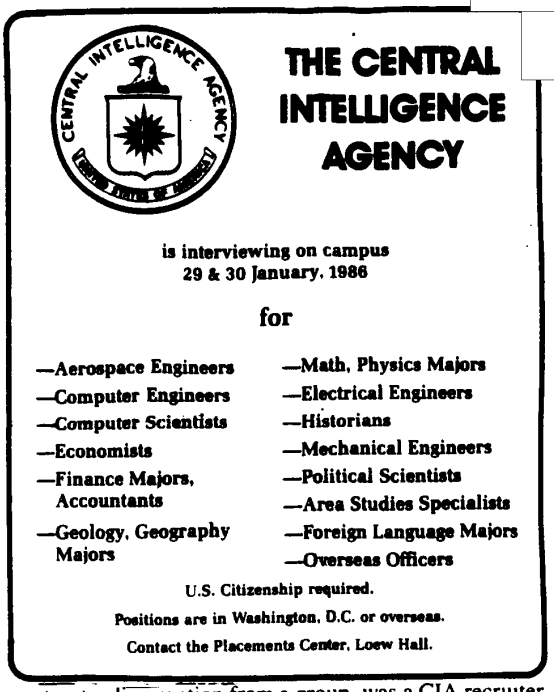
"Can you imagine what people would say if we contended that no one in the academic world has anything to offer us, that there is no information or perspective that could help us do our job?" he said. "It's inconceivable that any one would make that point."

The organization, which has operations world-wide, looks for many different fields of specialization. "Historically, they've looked for engineers, specifically electrical engineers, and people with Slavic and near-eastern languages," Settles said. "Personnel on the top of their list last year were accountants."

"They are primarily looking for people with strong language backgrounds, strong backgrounds in computer science, politics and economics," he said. "As far as we know, the people employed seem to be very happy."

The CIA has long maintained an active recruiting staff on the UW campus, and in the UW Placement Center one can peruse the glossy brochures and information manuals the agency distributes to colleges and universities across the nation.

"They've brought people in to talk to our groups on campus, and in fact the only person, in sixteen years, to get a standing ovation from a group, was a CIA recruiter. He was very straightforward, and responded to all our questions without changing the subject," Settles said.



He praised the efforts of the CIA's recruiters, saying, "I think that if you were to talk to them, they would be very open, very honest."

This was not the case with Tricia Hendricks, the recruiter conducting interviews this week, who refused to be interviewed or photographed by the Daily.

"We don't talk to the press," she said.

The Daily encountered similar resistance when contacting CIA administrators in charge of scouting the 6,000 universities for potential employees. After several people refused to discuss the agency's campus operations, the Daily managed to interview Robert Butts, Chief of Recruiting for the CIA.

"As far as degrees are concerned, we are hiring almost any discipline," he said. "In other words, political science, accounting, engineering—we span the spectrum."

"We, like most employers, would like to think that we're going to get somebody who's got a 3.0 or better, although if you've got a 2.5 and you've done a lot of extra-curricular activities, and you're working your way through college, that's certainly a consideration," he said.

Butts admitted that many students object to his agency's presence on their campuses. The problem began in the sixties, and administrators are working to improve relations with students.

"We schedule days where we can come on campus and interview people who've signed up," he said. "We run newspaper ads, magazine ads, for example, we just had an ad in the *New York Times*."

"We just recently ran ads in *Ebony* magazine, because we're very interested in recruiting minorities," he said.

"They agency regularly receives protests all over the country, from all kinds of people—that's their right. So it's not rare. We are trying to improve our image," he said.

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